

Zimbabwe ACM news

Doing ACM in Mafungautsi. Lessons and challenges.

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1.0 From the editors[1]



[1] The editors of this newsletter are: Ms T. Mutimukuru and Mr. W. Kozanayi. Both of them work for the Center for International Forestry Research.

Dear Readers

We want to take this opportunity to launch this first issue of the ACMZim newsletter, a product that was requested at the end of the Kadoma Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) training workshop[2]. The newsletter is intended to serve as a platform for field level forest extension and development officers to share their experiences in using the adaptive collaborative management (ACM) approach. This first issue focuses on sharing experiences of CIFOR's[3] ACM team in implementing the ACM approach (that was developed and is being promoted by CIFOR) in Mafungautsi state forest in Gokwe.

At the moment we anticipate that the newsletter will be produced twice a year, in February and in August, but we will be glad to increase the frequency of publication if need arises. We will therefore be happy to get your contributions that will help shape this newsletter, and your comments and suggestions on themes for the upcoming newsletters. We would like to let you know that your contributions are crucial for our learning processes as a team.

We are proposing the following theme for the next issue: 'Sharing our experiences in adopting

[2] The training workshop was organised by the Center for International Forestry Research for forest extension officers.

[3] CIFOR is headquartered in Bogor, Indonesia and has a number of regional offices, including the regional office for Eastern and Southern Africa, located in Harare, Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, CIFOR has a partnership with the Forestry Commission and also has links with other institutions whose main concern is the well-being of forests and forest users.

the ACM approach'. We therefore will be looking forward to your contributions on your experiences, challenges and lessons learnt as you made your first steps in adopting the ACM approach.

We would like to also thank you all in advance for your co-operation and support. We believe teamwork is the silver bullet to success, let's try it.

For comments, contributions and suggestions, please contact us on the following address:

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Enjoy your reading!

2.0 The ACM Research in Zimbabwe

2.1 Defining the ACM Approach in Zimbabwe

ACM approach (also known as the learning and collaboration approach) in the Zimbabwean context is defined as an approach that supports and enhances community based forestry by encouraging active participation of all relevant stakeholders, thereby empowering them to be more effective decision makers. It is a value-adding approach whereby individuals or groups who use or manage a forest, agree through a process of participatory action research to act together, learn and draw up plans for their forests. These plans are then implemented and the stakeholders then monitor them, reflect and learn together. ACM is therefore characterised by deliberate efforts among collaborating groups to communicate, negotiate and seek out opportunities to learn together about the impact of their actions. From such efforts they then improve the benefits they get from their forests. The main hypothesis in using the ACM approach in forest management is that, the approach helps to sustain forest resources and enhance the well being of resource users.

The ACM approach focuses on processes, behaviours, attitudes, skills and knowledge of people. It is centred on building social capital among stakeholders through enhancing group learning processes, collaboration, and adaptiveness. These processes are then expected to lead to better forest management practices and the improvement in human well being. The ACM approach results in the development of adaptive systems of forest management based on; (a) improved flows of information though feedback, (b) decision making that follows rules of 'experimentation', (c) communication and negotiation among stakeholders (d) fairer, more responsible representation among stakeholder groups and (e) group learning processes.

2.2 Mafungautsi forest background

Mafungautsi forest is located in Gokwe South District in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. The forest has a total area of 82,100 hectare. The vegetation of Mafungautsi is predominantly miombo woodland and dominant tree species are *Brachystaegia* and *Julbernadia* species. The dominant soils in Mafungautsi forest are the Kalahari sands and only a few patches can be found with sodic and heavy clay soils.



The forest is a catchment area for four major rivers in Zimbabwe namely, Sengwa, Mbumbusi, Ngondoma and Lutope. Conservation of the watershed was one of the main reasons why it was protected as a state forest in 1954. Mafungautsi forest is a source of several resources including pastures, grasses (broom and thatch), medicinal plants, honey, mushrooms, firewood, construction timber, game meat, Mopane worms, indigenous fruits and herbs.

Having encountered a number of management related problems in Mafungautsi, the Forestry Commission decided to embark on a pilot resource sharing project in Mafungautsi forest in 1994. The initiation of a resource-sharing project brought some changes in the management of the forest resource. The main

aim of the project was to enable surrounding communities to take an active role in the management of the forest resource. Fifteen Resource Management Committees (RMCs) were set up in various communities surrounding the forest and their main role was to monitor and control harvesting of the resources, to which communities were now allowed access.

2.3 The ACM intervention

In 1999, CIFOR's ACM project was introduced in Mafungautsi. To kick off the project, context studies were conducted to help the Zimbabwe ACM team to understand the context. One of the major findings of the context studies was that there was passiveness among communities surrounding the forest. The ACM team then decided to intervene and break this passiveness since the ACM approach hinges on action research that requires communities to actively participate and take lead in improving their lives and management strategies. The communities underwent Training for Transformation (T for T) as a means to break their passiveness. This training was a great success in making the communities reflect upon their behaviour, norms, and values and helped them to actively participate in issues that were pertinent to their lives. After the T for T training, there was a marked change, as women, who never used to attend resource management meetings began to take an active role in resource management activities.

The context studies also revealed that not everyone in the community was interested in harvesting all resources in the forest. Some were involved in harvesting one resource, while others were interested in a number of resources. There were also other community members who were not interested in any of the forest resources. The establishment of resource user groups helped stakeholders interested in similar resources to come together and share their knowledge and experiences and learn together. The researchers took a lead role in facilitating the groups to come up with visions for their desired future (referred to as future scenarios) and to assess the current situation with regard to the resource they were focusing on. They later identified possible factors that could hinder them from moving from the current to their desired future situation, and then finally came up with action plans to overcome these hindrances. The action plans were later implemented, and collaborative monitoring systems were put in place to check if stakeholders were moving towards their desired direction. In the collaborative monitoring system that was set up, a monitoring subcommittee was formed and tasked to take lead in the monitoring processes and in creating opportunities for stakeholders to share their monitoring results and learn together.

2.4 Lessons and Challenges

Highlighted below are some of the key lessons from the Mafungautsi case.

- Training for transformation is an effective way to overcome passiveness among resource users
- The Mafungautsi case showed that focussing only on small interest groups (the said resource user groups), is not only cost effective but also enhances fast learning by group members who already have similar interests.
- Future scenarios are a useful tool for action planning as they generate interest, energy and optimism when people seem to be disillusioned.
- Through social learning, communities become more adaptive in their resource management strategies. However for social learning to occur, there is need for opportunities to be created for stakeholders to share experiences and learn together
- Even though monitoring systems exist in most cases, it is important that such systems be made deliberate and systematic in order to enhance learning

Challenges

- To initiate ACM processes requires commitment and considerable investment in terms of money and time.
- Most incentive structures are based on tangible material benefits and not processes that generate them and yet the ACM approach focuses more on processes than on their ultimate goals.
- ACM has high chances of success if communities are prepared to take lead in development initiatives. However in many cases communities are passive and are victims of the donor dependency syndrome.
- One of the key elements of the ACM approach is collaboration by

stakeholders. In most cases it is difficult for stakeholders to collaborate as they have different interests, are mired in many conflicts, have different cultural values that hinder collaboration efforts.

3. 0 Major events

3.1 Gokwe National Tree Planting Day at the Malandas

On the 12th of December 2003, Gokwe South District commemorated the National Tree Planting Day (NTPD) in style as the whole Midlands converged at the homestead of one of the most productive farmers in the District. The Malanda family, who were the host family, has a flourishing orchard that is rich in fruit trees ranging from mangoes, peaches, guavas, avocado pears, nartjies, apples to oranges. In addition to the orchard, the family also boasts of a very enterprising bee-keeping project. In total the family owns more than 100 beehives. The family is actively involved in agro-forestry activities as they produce crops such as maize and groundnuts in between rows of fruit trees. The Malanda family gets an annual income from the sale of fruits and honey that is close to a million dollars. Most of the fruits are sold. Sometimes the Malandas add value to their fruits by making fruit juice from oranges. The juice is for own consumption and sale to the local community.



Guests at the ceremony

A number of important guests graced the occasion. Initially the president of the country was supposed to be the guest of honour at the function but this was not to be due to the emergence of other noble commitments. However some officers from the office of the president were present at the ceremony to commemorate the NTPD. The governor, who was a replacement for the state president also cancelled the trip to the Malandas at the last minute and was in turn represented by the District Administrator of Gokwe, Mr Marongwe. Mr. Marongwe read the governor's prepared speech. The theme for 2004 was "*Forests for improved household income"*. The tree of the year was musau (*Zizphus spp*), which is valuable for its edible fruits. Celebrating the NTPD at the Malanda homestead fitted well with the theme of the year since the family was realizing substantial income from the sale of fruits and from honey.

At the end of the function, the Beekeepers Association of Zimbabwe donated a Kenyan Top Beehive to the Malanda family as a present for the wonderful job the family was doing in the District. Other participants at the ceremony also donated $10 000.00 cash as a present to the Malanda family.

Entertainment



Entertainment was provided by pupils from a nearby local school and two musical groups who composed songs and poems in praise of the NTPD and forests. The Gokwe police, through its outreach programme, funds the two aforementioned musical bands in an effort to create employment for the Gokwe youth.

Some learning points from the event

1. Events, such as the NTPD, create opportunities for stakeholders to meet, share their knowledge and learn from each other. For instance, the Malandas got an opportunity to share with the rest of the people their experiences from their agro-forestry and beekeeping projects and they also managed to get advice on how to overcome some of challenges they faced.

2. Giving recognition to innovators or people who excel in what they do, can be an effective incentive for them to share their knowledge and experiences with others.
3. The involvement of youth at events such as the NTPD, helps them to learn at early stages about the benefits of taking good care of their natural resources.

3.2 ACM project workshop by CIFOR

On the 27th of January 2004, CIFOR organised a workshop for its partners and other interested organisations. The main objective of the workshop was to seek feedback on work that has been carried out so far by the two main partners, CIFOR and the FC, in up-scaling the ACM approach to other provinces in Zimbabwe. Most of the workshop participants were excited about the ACM approach, and also gave their comments on the key issues to be considered in future.

4.0 Upcoming ACM events

- Mr. I. Mutasa, the programme officer for the resource-sharing program in Mafungautsi is going to take resource users on a look and learn visit to Chipinge and Nyanga from the 15th to the 18th of February 2004. It is hoped that the farmers will be able to learn about processes that can be used for adding value to natural resources.
- The CIFOR monitoring team is planning to make their maiden trip around the 7 districts, which have been selected as learning centres for the ACM program. The purpose of the visit is for the ACM team to learn how facilitation of the ACM processes by Forestry Extension Officers is unfolding. It being the team's first trip to the learning centres, the trip will also serve as a familiarisation tour for the CIFOR monitoring team. The tour is supposed to take place during the first week of February.

5.0 Quotable quotes

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do... Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover....." Mark Twain

If you have any inspiring quote, please send it to us so that we can share it with all our readers. Remember we all need to be inspired.

6.0 News

1. The ACM Zimbabwe team leader, Dr. F. Matose has left CIFOR. He is now the Programme Manager for the CBNR Programme under the PLAAS at the University of Western Cape, in South Africa. We wish him well in his new job.

2. Dr N. Nemarundwe has been appointed the new team leader for the ACM Zim team. Before joining CIFOR, she was a Research Associate at the Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Zimbabwe. With her experience, we are sure the ACM ZIM program is in safe hands.

3. The 15minutes film of the ACM training workshop is now ready. Copies will be distributed soon.

4. A computer aided visioning tool, called Co-View, which has been developed at CIFOR, has taken root in Zimbabwe. So far nearly 30 people have experienced using the tool. Co-view helps when facilitating the development of group visions and these are instantly transformed into simulated computer models that can be used to simulate future scenarios. So far many people have commented that Co-View is useful. For further information about this tool, please contact Mr Wavell Standa-Gunda, at the following address:

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For the news section, we would be also delighted to have news on the social front from you, on birthdays, marriages, deaths and appointments. We are also proposing another section for the next issue on 'letters to the editors.' We will be glad to receive your letters.